

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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1. A method for selectively downloading a multi-part e-mail message to an e-mail client operated by a user from an e-mail server, the multi-part e-mail message including an attachment, the method comprising the steps of:

- (a) retrieving at least attachment information for the multi-part e-mail message from the e-mail server;
- (b) preparing a formatted message for sending to the e-mail client, said formatted message containing a link to the attachment, such that the attachment is not sent to the e-mail client;
- (c) sending said formatted message to the e-mail client; and
- (d) displaying said formatted message to the user by the e-mail client.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein said attachment information includes the entirety of the multi-part e-mail message, such that step (b) further comprises the step of separating the multi-part e-mail message into a plurality of portions, including at least a first portion containing the attachment.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein the multi-part e-mail message includes a text-part, such that step (b) further comprises the step of separating the multi-part e-mail message into a second portion containing said text-part, and wherein step (b) includes the step of adding said second portion to said formatted message.

4. The method of claim 3, further comprising the step of:
  - (e) selecting said link by the user from said formatted message.
5. The method of claim 4, further comprising the step of:
  - (f) downloading said attachment in a streamed manner for viewing by the user.
6. The method of claim 5, further comprising the steps of:
  - (g) providing a Web browser for interacting with the user; and
  - (h) displaying said attachment by said Web browser, such that step (f) is performed according to HTTP.
7. The method of claim 5, wherein said attachment is decoded before being downloaded.
8. The method of claim 1, wherein said attachment information is a header for the attachment, such that the method further comprises the step of:
  - (e) downloading the attachment from the e-mail server.
9. The method of claim 8, wherein step (e) is performed in parallel to step (b).

10. The method of claim 5, wherein step (e) includes the step of decoding said attachment.

11. The method of claim 1, wherein said attachment information is a header for the attachment, such that the method further comprises the steps of:

- (e) selecting said link by the user from said formatted message;
- (f) downloading the attachment from the e-mail server; and
- (g) downloading said attachment from proxy to client in a streamed manner for viewing by the user.

12. The method of claim 11, further comprising the steps of:

- (h) providing a Web browser for interacting with the user; and
- (i) displaying said attachment by said Web browser, such that step (h) is performed according to HTTP.

13. The method of claim 1, wherein step (a) includes the step of providing an e-mail proxy for communicating with the e-mail server and with the e-mail client, such that steps (a) – (c) are performed by said e-mail proxy.

14. A system for selectively downloading a multi-part e-mail message for a user, the multi-part e-mail message including an attachment, the system comprising:

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- (a) an e-mail server for receiving the multi-part e-mail message;
  - (b) an e-mail proxy in communication with said e-mail server for receiving at least attachment information about the multi-part e-mail message, and for preparing a formatted message containing a link to the attachment; and
  - (c) an e-mail client in communication with said e-mail proxy for receiving said formatted message and for displaying said formatted message to the user, such that the attachment is displayed to the user after the user selects said link.

15. The system of claim 14, wherein said e-mail proxy downloads the attachment with said attachment information.

16. The system of claim 14, wherein said e-mail proxy downloads the attachment separately from said attachment information.

17. The system of claim 14, wherein the multi-part e-mail message contains a text-part, and said formatted message includes said text-part.

18. The system of claim 14, wherein said e-mail proxy downloads and decodes the attachment before the attachment is sent to said e-mail client.

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